

Risky business

Erin McLemore is pursuing a degree in social work at Meridian Community College. Her cousin, 1st Lt. John Brian Creel of the U.S. Air Force, is serving overseas.

"He is fighting for our freedom and he is doing great things," Erin said. "I wanted everyone to know how proud I am of him."

By Erin McLemore

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We have all been in situations that were too risky. In most cases, we decided to get out of those situations. That was not the case when my cousin, 1st Lt. John Brian Creel, found himself faced with a life-or-death decision.

As long as I can remember, Brian has been in the military. He started out in the U.S. Army and served in Operation Desert Storm. Several years ago, he transferred to the U.S. Air Force and became a helicopter pilot instructor. The military and helicopters have always been his passion.

After President Bush declared war on terrorism, it was inevitable that Brian would go and serve his country. His job in the Air Force

was to fly helicopter rescue missions.

One mission that stands out in my head is a zero visibility rescue he and his crew performed during a sandstorm. During the sandstorm, a CH-47 had crashed. Brian and his crew were sent in for the rescue. His crew finally spotted the survivors, and they descended to the ground. The rescue was successful, but that is not the end of the story.

As Brian and his crew ascended with the survivors, his wingman was engaged by enemy missiles. Selflessly, Brian turned around to provide defense against the enemy's fire. He successfully kept the enemy away. After protecting his wingman, his aircraft was fired upon. He maneuvered around the missiles and came through without a scratch.

In appreciation, Brian was awarded the Richard T. Knight Award for outstanding achievement. He was presented with a plaque and the bronze rescue angel. He is truly a hero and a risk-taker. We should thank God every day that we have such brave men and women defending freedom — and pray for His circle of protection around them.

Life

Byron Courville's daughter submitted this poem to "Profile 2005: A Letter from Home." These are words of a U.S. Navy man killed in action in October 1989.

"My daddy had been aboard the USS Lexington carrier when a new pilot, landing solo for the first time, lost control and crashed," Jessica Courville wrote. "My daddy, and four others, were killed. I remember my mom crying late at night whenever she thought the three of us (children) were asleep."

Byron's words are as true now as they were in 1988, the year before he died.

A man is born:
What shall he be?
A great one perhaps,
A little like Thee.
A life is lived:
What is it like?
A rolling path,
Valleys and pikes.

A man shall die:
What shall he leave?
A hope and love,
If to Jesus he cleaved.

— Byron G. Courville, 1988

Contributors



In this section are stories, features and artwork by:

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